

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC



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12 TIPS FOR A SAFE HOLIDAY FEAST

More than one in ten of us cook Christmas dinner for a large crowd. Catering safely for a large gathering can be a challenge in a domestic kitchen; refrigerators and ovens never seem big enough. When there is so much food, some is often served warm when it should be chilled, or too cool when it should be piping hot. These actions can result in an unpleasant case of food poisoning for you or your family and friends. The following are 12 tips for safe food handling practices during the holidays:

1. **Wash your hands frequently**-especially before preparing food, after touching raw food, coughing, sneezing, or touching pets.
2. **Frozen turkeys or other poultry must always be thawed thoroughly and fully before cooking**-A 15 pound turkey will take 24-28 hours to thaw in the refrigerator; allow over two days for a 25 pound turkey to defrost.
3. **Wash your turkey carefully**-washing a turkey or any other poultry can splash harmful bacteria already on the bird around the kitchen leading to the cross contamination of other foods. Thoroughly clean and sanitize sinks, countertops, and any other areas exposed to splashing.

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4. **Use separate chopping boards and utensils-** or wash them thoroughly to avoid cross contamination between raw meat and any cooked or ready-to-eat foods.
5. **Ideally, cook your stuffing separately-** but if you feel you must stuff the bird, make sure you take the stuffing weight into account when calculating your cooking time.
6. **Poultry, sausages and chopped and minced meat must always be thoroughly cooked-**check to make sure there are no pink bits in the middle, that the juices run clear, and they are piping hot throughout the cooking time.
7. **Don't use raw eggs in food that will not be cooked-**such as chocolate mousse or homemade mayonnaise-use pasteurized egg instead.
8. **Always serve hot food piping hot and as soon as it is ready.**
9. **Don't leave leftovers lying around-**but make sure hot foods cool quickly before putting into the refrigerator. To speed cooling: divide into smaller portions or place in shallow containers.
10. **Avoid re-heating food more than once-**if you re-heat leftovers make sure they're piping hot throughout. Do not eat left over meat that has been refrigerated for longer than four days or left over stuffing or gravy refrigerated for longer than two days.
11. **Give your refrigerator and freezer a good cleaning-**before you stock up for the holidays. Make more space by using up existing items such as sodas and sauces already stored in the refrigerator.
12. **Don't overstock your refrigerator or freezer-**it makes it difficult to maintain the right temperature. Food should be stored separately in covered containers and properly wrapped. Always store cooked food and ready-to-eat food above raw food like fish, poultry and meat, which should be in covered containers on the bottom shelf to prevent them from dripping onto other foods.